UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/AC.198/1993/5
3 May 1993

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION
Fifteenth session
10-28 May 1993

SUBSTANTIVE QUESTIONS

CONTINUOUS AND MAJOR PUBLICATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

Report of the Secretary-General

1. In paragraph 2 (e) of resolution 47/73 B of 14 December 1992, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit "a report on the continuous and major publications to the Committee on Information at its fifteenth session, providing the following details:

"(a) The list of publications and their circulation figures;

"(b) Their cost;

"(c) The original language versions and the languages into which the publications were translated;

"(d) Target audiences, including, where possible, the intended end-use of the specific products".

2. The Department of Public Information produces and distributes several continuous and major publications in pursuance of its mandate "to promote ... an informed understanding of the work and purposes of the United Nations among the peoples of the world" 1/ and in response to subsequent resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. These publications cover the major issues before the United Nations and are intended to promote the principles and purposes, as well as to contribute to the implementation of particular programme objectives mandated by the General Assembly.

3. The Department's continuous and major publications are financed exclusively through the regular budget, except for Development Business, which is financed from extrabudgetary funds and for Africa Recovery, which is partially financed from extrabudgetary funds.

4. The question of estimating the total cost of the publications of the United Nations, including staff costs related to the preparation and drafting of such publications, has been a matter of concern to Member States and to the Secretariat for many years. A complete and accurate costing of the publications of the Organization would provide very useful information to Member States, particularly in the context of consideration and adoption of the programme budgets and would also be a most important management tool. While efforts have been made in this direction, considerable methodological problems remain unsolved. These include the absence of a practical, accurate and cost-effective mechanism for capturing the time actually devoted to specific publications by staff engaged in related research and drafting.

5. The cost estimates included in this document are restricted solely to production costs incurred by the Department of Public Information and its estimated staff costs in the preparation of the publications covered. The production costs include external printing, contractual services or temporary staff. Not included in these estimates are the costs of staff time in other departments, including language services, and other costs and services of other departments, such as internal reproduction. The estimates should therefore be considered as tentative and partial.

6. The Department's continuous and major publications are described below in subparagraphs (a) to (m). Cost figures for the Department of Public Information are given for identifiable direct costs, such as external printing and external translation as well as for estimated internal costs attributable to the preparation and production of the publications within the Department. Preparation and production activities by the Department include planning, commissioning of manuscripts, data and photo research, drafting, editing, copy preparation, typesetting and proofreading, design, distribution and associated administrative functions.

(a) Africa Recovery

This is a quarterly magazine devoted to promoting global awareness of the critical economic situation in Africa and of the needed strategies for action. The 36-page publication is illustrated with photos and graphs. Targeted audiences include the media, representatives of development agencies, business leaders, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the academic community, and policy-makers on Africa at multilateral and bilateral levels. It is produced in English (23,000 copies) and French (8,000 copies) and is the sole responsibility of the Africa Recovery Unit (1 P-5, 1 P-4, 1 P-3, and 4 General Service posts). Estimated production and staff costs for the four issues released in 1992 in English and French amounted to US$ 514,000 (including costs for temporary drafting and editorial assistance of US$ 31,000; for external translation of US$ 16,000; and for external printing of US$ 82,000). A significant part of this figure is borne by the Trust Fund for Information Support for African Economic Recovery and Development, which receives extrabudgetary contributions from Member States and from United Nations agencies.

In the light of that, the General Assembly stressed the importance of the Fund and invited the Secretary-General to mobilize resources for it. 2/ The balance available in the Trust Fund as of 31 December 1992 was US$ 230,000. Annual subscriptions have recently been instituted and are available to

individuals for US$ 20 and to institutions for US$ 35. Currently, the publication has a paid subscription base of only 84 (25 individual and 59 institutional subscribers), but it should be kept in mind that its main purpose is advocacy and not profit.

(b) Development Business

This biweekly publication was launched in 1978 by the Department of Public Information in accordance with agreements reached with the World Bank, the Caribbean Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and, in 1992, with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Development Business was established as an income supplement to Development Forum 3/ and as a service to the development banks and their member States. It is the only publication permitted to print official procurement information from all the major development banks and bank borrowers are required by regulation to publish their invitations to bid on bank projects in Development Business.

Development Business sells for US$ 395 a year for 24 issues. Each issue consists of a 24- to 32-page publication and a separate 40- to 56-page summary of pending bank projects. The developing and developed country companies/consultants that subscribe to Development Business use it to monitor and participate in international competitive bidding on development bank- and United Nations-funded projects. United Nations and development bank officials read it to track project activity.

In addition to the publication itself, Development Business offers its subscribers access to an on-line computer and telex service, called Scan-A-Bid, for those who want to receive project and bidding information faster. A one-year subscription to Scan-A-Bid costs US$ 960.

In 1992, the Development Business print run averaged 4,500 copies per issue. The publication is produced primarily in English but it contains sections in French and Spanish. It is the sole responsibility of the Development Business Unit (1 P-4, 9 General Service posts). Production costs for the 24 issues released in 1992 amounted to US$ 991,000, including US$ 62,500 for external printing. About 4,300 copies of each issue were mailed in 1992, including bulk subscriptions. Currently, there are 3,200 paying subscribers.

Development Business has generated a surplus of income over expenditure since its creation and it continues to be self-supporting. Total income earned by Development Business for 1992 amounted to US$ 1,220,000. The net income is paid back to the Development Forum Trust Fund against which the expenditure is charged and which had a deficit. As of 31 December 1992, the Fund balance amounted to US$ 45,000. Development Business subscription income for the first quarter of 1993 is running at 28 per cent above the level for the same period last year.

(c) UN Chronicle

This is the official quarterly magazine of the United Nations covering action by political and other legislative bodies of the Organization, including the General Assembly and the Security Council, as well as current developments throughout the United Nations system. Four issues are published annually, with

each issue averaging 84 pages. Targeted audiences include students, teachers and professors, other patrons of public school and university libraries, representatives of NGOs, and government officials. It is published in Arabic (2,000 copies), Chinese (5,000 copies), English (13,050 copies), French (4,200 copies), Russian (2,000 copies) and Spanish (1,100 copies). The English, French and Spanish versions are produced internally, except for the cover. The Arabic edition is translated and typeset in Cairo, and printed in New York internally. The Chinese and Russian versions are translated, printed and distributed by contractors in Beijing and Moscow, respectively.

Estimated production and staff costs for the four issues released in 1992 in these six languages amounted to US$ 749,000 (including external translation costs of US$ 100,000, external printing costs of US$ 98,000, design and artwork of US$ 14,000, temporary drafting assistance of US$ 2,000 and related operational costs of US$ 23,500). Production of the UN Chronicle is the sole responsibility of the UN Chronicle Unit (1 P-5, 1 P-4, 2 P-3 and 4 General Service posts). Subscriptions are available for US$ 20; the publication has a paid subscription base of approximately 5,800. Individual sales at US$ 8.50 a copy totalled 3,165 in 1992. Both subscriptions and individual sales produced a total estimated revenue of US$ 179,000, which is credited to income section 3 of the United Nations regular budget.

(d) Yearbook of the United Nations

This publication is the major reference work covering the activities of the United Nations and its common system during each calendar year. It provides detailed information on political and security, economic and social, trusteeship and decolonization, legal, administrative and budgetary questions, as well as on the work of each related organization in the common system and is the sole responsibility of the UN Yearbook Unit (1 P-5, 2 P-4, 2 P-3, 2 P-2 and 5 General Service posts). The targeted audiences include government officials, researchers, teachers, students, NGOs and academic institutions. It is published in English (8,000 copies) by Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Dordrecht, the Netherlands. All costs for printing and distribution are borne by the external publisher. Estimated staff costs for the 1987 edition (1,431 pages) released in 1992 amounted to US$ 918,000. The publisher hired and paid the freelance writers for the 1987 edition at a cost of US$ 7,000. Estimated staff costs for the 1991 edition (1,124 pages) released in 1992, amounted to US$ 697,000. The sales price for the 1987 and the 1991 edition is US$ 105 and US$ 115, respectively. The Department received 900 copies of the 1987 edition and 930 copies of the 1991 edition for free distribution to permanent missions, permanent observer missions, United Nations depositary libraries, United Nations information centres and services, and other United Nations offices. Sales of the publication produced a total estimated revenue for the 1987 edition of US$ 112,000 and for the 1991 edition of US$ 121,000, credited to income section 3 of the United Nations regular budget. Production of the issues for 1988, 1989 and 1990 has still to be implemented. The 1988 and 1992 issues will be published in 1993, the 1989 and 1993 issues in 1994, and the 1990 and 1994 issues in 1995, thus eliminating the backlog.

(e) Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization

Targeted audiences of the Secretary-General's annual report to the General Assembly include government officials, eminent persons, representatives of NGOs, media and the academic community. It is produced in English (15,000 copies), French and Spanish (3,000 copies each). Estimated staff costs attributable to the Department for the edition (78 pages) in the three languages amounted to US$ 36,000 (including costs for translation and indexing of US$ 20,000). Costs for external printing amounted to US$ 35,000, bringing the total estimated costs of the publication to US$ 71,000. With the assistance of United Nations information centres and their local partners, the publication was also released in Bangla, Dutch, German and Japanese. It was not possible to estimate the costs for these activities. The publication is not a sales item.

(f) Notes for Speakers

This publication is a tool to assist persons who prepare presentations about key issues before the Organization. The annual publication, released prior to United Nations Day in October, assembles in a suitable format information about topical activities of the United Nations. Targeted audiences are teachers, students and NGOs, as well as United Nations staff. It is published in English (15,000 copies), French and Spanish (5,000 copies each). Estimated production and staff costs for the edition released in 1992 totalled US$ 103,000 (costs for external printing amounted to US$ 50,000 and for external translation to US$ 12,000). The publication is distributed mainly through United Nations information centres and services as well as through the Department's NGO Liaison Service. It is not a sales item.

(g) Objective: Justice

This is a biannual review dedicated to the promotion of justice through self-determination, the elimination of apartheid and racial discrimination and the advancement of human rights. Targeted audiences include NGOs, media and educational institutions. It is published in English only (5,000 copies). The edition released in 1992 has 45 pages and its estimated production and staff costs amounted to US$ 22,000. The publication is printed internally. The sales price is US$ 5. Reported sales were of 235 copies (including the paid subscription base of 138) for a total of US$ 1,175. Even if the purpose of the publication is advocacy and not profit, it is not clear how many copies are actually read, and the future of Objective: Justice is currently under review by the Department.

(h) World Media Handbook

This is a reference tool presented in a directory format, published biennially since 1990. It provides a summary of selected data on print and broadcasting media, academic institutions related to communications and journalistic professional associations covering countries around the world. It has been honoured by several professional associations. It is published in English only (5,700 copies). Targeted audiences are information professionals and media practitioners within the United Nations system and other organizations, representatives of the media and representatives of related institutions. Estimated production and staff costs for the edition released in

1992 amounted to US$ 132,000 (including costs for external printing of the four-coloured cover of US$ 4,000); the 504-page publication was printed internally. The sales price is US$ 65. As of 1 March 1993, 596 copies were sold for a total of US$ 39,000. Since updating the publication will cost less than producing it, costs should diminish, while it is hoped that the professional world will find it useful and the readership will increase.

(i) UN in Brief

This continually updated, illustrated 20-page pamphlet provides general information about the United Nations, its principal organs and major activities. The publication was initiated in response to growing demands for succinct information in a handy format. Targeted audiences are students and the public at large. It is published in English (30,000 copies), French and Spanish (20,000 copies each). Estimated production and staff costs of the edition released in 1992 amounted to US$ 31,000 (including costs for external printing of US$ 20,000). The publication is not a sales item.

(j) United Nations Film and Video Catalogue

This is a biennial illustrated reference book that has been published since 1964 to promote film and video productions of the Department. It provides succinct information and data on available films, videos, photo and archival film footage, and on the United Nations regional film libraries in 124 countries. Audiences are national television and cable broadcasters, representatives of NGOs, educational institutions and government offices. It is published in English (10,000 copies) and French (5,000 copies) Estimated production and staff costs for the 71-page English edition released in 1992 amounted to US$ 89,000 (including US$ 40,000 for external printing); the French version will be printed internally in 1993. The publication is not a sales item.

(k) Basic Facts about the United Nations

This is a reference book containing a brief description of the work of the United Nations and its agencies on major issues before the Organization. Targeted audiences are NGOs, educational institutions, teachers and students. It is published in English (65,000 copies), French and Spanish (10,000 copies each) and distributed through United Nations offices and bookstores (sales price US$ 5). The latest edition was issued in 1990 (236 pages), and an updated edition is intended for release during the third quarter of 1993.

(l) Everyone's United Nations

This is a concise historical account of the United Nations and the activities of the common system. It is regularly updated and reissued. Targeted audiences include government officials, NGOs, media, educational and research institutions, and library patrons. The latest edition (484 pages) was published in 1986 in English only (28,200 copies). Sales prices for the cloth-bound version and the paperback version were US$ 14.95 and US$ 9.95, respectively. The next edition of the publication is planned for release in 1993.

(m) Image and Reality

This is a booklet that provides factual information on the United Nations at work and the achievements of the Organization, and serves as a tool to foster an informed understanding of the role of the United Nations. Targeted audiences include opinion-makers, representatives of the media, NGOs, educational institutions and the business community. It is published in English (100,000 copies), French and Spanish (15,000 copies each). The latest edition (43 pages) was published in 1986. The next edition is scheduled for release in 1994.

7. In addition, the Department releases a large number of publications on specific and topical issues of major concern to the international community, such as peacemaking, peace-keeping, the struggle against apartheid, the question of Palestine, human rights in all its aspects, humanitarian issues, women, sustainable economic and social development and environmental protection. 4/ The targeted audiences vary according to the subject matter, but they are usually policy- and opinion-makers, particularly in government institutions, NGOs and the media. Audiences are reached through established and regularly updated mailing lists maintained both at Headquarters and by the network of United Nations information centres, services and other information components in the field. These publications are not for sale, and individual cost factors are difficult to quantify. The Department will evaluate these publications and the philosophy behind them, starting in 1993.

8. The publication activities of the Department endeavour to take into account new and changing priorities. These new priorities and demands on the Department call for a dynamic approach that is sufficiently flexible but that meets the varying information needs of the diverse audiences around the world. In particular, the Department has been making efforts to respond to the increased media and public interest in United Nations peace-keeping and peacemaking activities by preparing and disseminating relevant information materials.

9. Publications of the Department are distributed free of charge to United Nations information centres and services, regional commissions and other United Nations offices in the field, representatives of intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, media and research organizations, United Nations depository libraries and government offices. Reference copies of these publications are also sent to permanent missions and permanent observer missions at Headquarters. Some publications by the Department are available for sale through the Sales Section of the Office of Conference Services. These publications include: the Yearbook of the United Nations, UN Chronicle, Basic Facts about the United Nations, Everyone's United Nations, Objective: Justice, and World Media Handbook.

10. Most of the publications are distributed from United Nations Headquarters to all United Nations offices by diplomatic pouch or by special carriers. The average costs for mailing publications world wide are approximately US$ 0.50 per pound by regular pouch and US$ 0.75 per pound by first-class pouch. Charges for parcel services through special couriers are approximately US$ 1.75 per pound. More than 2 million copies of publications have been distributed in 1992, in addition to statements and messages by the Secretary-General, parliamentary documents, and press releases. For 1992, costs for distribution of information

material amounted to US$ 256,000 (including costs for pouches, special couriers and other related services). In the light of this, and mindful of the need to ensure timely delivery which could well define the usefulness of the publications, budgetary allocations for major and continuous publications should, in all instances, include resources for distribution as well. This issue will be tackled in the programme and budget submission for the biennium 1994-1995.

11. In order to enhance the circulation of its publications, the United Nations has employed various promotional and advertising methods, including: placement of advertisements (often unpaid) in newspapers or journals; participation in book fairs and promotional exhibits; and issuing brochures targeted for special audiences. Efforts are directed towards both the subscribers and the general readership.

12. As reflected in the present report, the Department has a high level of investment in the production of its publications indicating the need to re-evaluate the utilization of human and budgetary resources against the usefulness and value of the products to both their intended readership and to the United Nations. This re-evaluation effort is currently undertaken by the Department of Public Information, which would greatly value the input and observations of the Committee.

Notes

1/ General Assembly resolution 13 (I) of 13 February 1946.

2/ General Assembly resolution 46/185 C, sect. XXII, para. 1.

3/ Development Forum, published since 1972, was a 16-page journal devoted to issues relating to economic and social development. Production costs for the five issues released in 1992 in English (10,000 copies), French (5,000 copies), and Spanish (4,000 copies), amounted to US$ 44,500 (external printing of US$ 28,500 and translation of US$ 16,000). In view of its financial situation and the budgetary constraints which prevented an increase in the annual subvention from the United Nations regular budget, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) at its meeting on 9 December 1992 agreed to cease its publication by 31 December 1992. A recommendation to this effect was included in the report on the performance of Development Forum (A/CN.1/R.1162) of 4 November 1992 submitted at the request of ACABQ.

4/ In 1992, the Department released 152 books, booklets, pamphlets, backgrounders and posters on these issues (many of them in all official languages). The publications include among others: "An Agenda for Peace"; "Declaration of the Right of Peoples to Peace"; "World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons"; "Information kit on Ageing"; "Information kit on Disability"; "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women"; "Women: Vulnerable Victims of AIDS"; "Ending Discrimination: A Fundamental Right"; "Women in Developing Countries - Victims of Economic Crisis"; "The United Nations and Drug Abuse Control"; "Women Facing Industrialization"; "Earth Summit UN Focus No. 1: Women, Environment and Development: Sustaining our common future"; "Convention on the Rights of the Child"; "Decolonization: the task ahead"; "UNCED Earth Summit - In Our Hands";

"Teaching about Environment and Development"; "Women: Challenges to the Year 2000"; "UN Social Agenda No. 6"; "Agreements on Political Settlements of the Cambodia Conflict"; "UN Focus: Women and Environment - Partners for Life"; "Life of the Palestinian under Israeli Occupation"; "United Nations Conference on Environment and Development"; "Security Council Summit Session"; "The United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons: A Decade of Accomplishment"; "The Path to Peace: El Salvador Agreements"; "UNTAC Press Kit/Fact Sheet"; "United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia"; "ONUSAL in El Salvador"; "UN in Action"; "Student Leaflet 1992 on Natural Disasters"; "Rio Declaration and Forest Principles"; "Helsinki Transcript - Prospect for Peace in the Middle East"; "International Year for the World's Indigenous Peoples"; "World Economy Survey"; "UN Focus: UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR)"; "UN Focus: United Nations Verification Mission in Angola"; "Childhood Disability: Five decades of action"; "World Conference on Human Rights"; "UN Mechanisms to Protect Human Rights"; "Human Rights and Humanitarian Assistance"; "UN Focus: Apartheid - South Africa"; "Indigenous Peoples. Environment and Development"; "Press Summary of Agenda 21"; "Convention on Climate Change"; "For the Rights of the Palestinian"; "UN and the situation in Former Yugoslavia"; "New Dimensions of Arms Regulation and Disarmament in the Post-Cold War Era"; "The Declaration of the Alma-Ata Conference (Pluralism in Print Media)"; "The UN and the Situation in Somalia".